



L. SIMONSON • BATISTA • FABER

STEEL

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STEEL



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BATISTA/
JANKE
94

MAXIMUM
ORBIT 2
OF 3

PREPARE THE
SHIP TO **WARP**
TO THE SPALIK
SYSTEM.

YOU
WANNA BOMB
OUTTA HERE LIKE
A **BLUE-BUTT**
FLY, WE GOTTA
SHIFT **POWER** FROM
THE SHIELDIN'...

...AN THIS
OLE BUCKET'S
GONNA SHOW
UP ON THEIR
RADAR CLEAR
AS GLASS.

WE ARE
NOT GOING
TO LEAVE
EARTH ORBIT
SLOWLY...

...SIMPLY
BECAUSE YOU
WISH TO CONTINUE
VIEWING THEIR OLD
COWBOY MOVIES
WITH **MINIMAL IN-**
TERFERENCE.

IT DOES
NOT **MATTER**
NOW IF THE
HUMANS KNOW
WE'RE HERE.

NOTHING
ON EARTH
COULD
CATCH US,
ANYWAY.

WARP
US OUT OF
HERE, B'RAD!
NOW!

KEEP YER
BLINNIES
IN ORDER,
DE'CINE.
WE'RE
TAKIN'
OFF...

"...FASTER THAN A DUCK IN A HAILSTORM!"

I CANNOT BELIEVE WE ARE INCARCERATED IN THESE INHIBITOR BEAMS.

YOU HAD A LOT OF NERVE, STEEL, ONCE CLAIMING TO BE SUPER-MAN.

HE WOULD NOT HAVE ALLOWED US TO BE CAPTURED BY THIS KRENON SCUM.

SUPERMAN PROBABLY WOULDN'T HAVE LISTENED TO YOUR HALF-BAKED PLAN...

...TO INVADE A STRANGE STAR-SHIP WITH AN ARMY OF TWO IN THE FIRST PLACE, MAXIMA.

SHOWDOWN



MY BRIDE-TO-BE HAS FIRE, DOES SHE NOT?

SURE DOES. JUST MAKE SURE YA DON'T GET YER FINGERS BURNT!

AS FER THAT OTHER FELLA--

I'M HER FAVORITE CYBORG RIGHT AT PRESENT, DE'CINE. AN' I DON'T APPRECIATE NO RIVALS--

WE HAVE ARRIVED IN THE SPALIK SYSTEM, LORD DE'CINE. A PATROL CRAFT APPROACHES.

IF STEEL IS A CYBORG, AS THE UNUSUAL ENERGY EMISSIONS FROM HIS ARMOR SUGGESTS...

...HE WILL MAKE A FINE ADDITION TO MY MOTHER'S COLLECTION.


LOUISE SIMONSON
WRITER
CHRIS BATISTA
PENCILS
RICH FABER
INKS
DAVE GRAFE
COLOR
PAT BROSSEAU
LETTERS
FRANK PITTARESE
EDITS
SPECIAL THANKS TO
DEREC RUCCO AND
HOWARD PORTER

EXCELLENT! COMPUTER, PUT THEM ON THE SCREEN.

YOUR YACHT HAS WARPED INTO PROSCRIBED TERRITORY.

IDENTIFY YOURSELVES AND SURRENDER...





...OR I WILL
BE FORCED TO
TAKE PUNITIVE
ACTION.

I
APOLO
COMMA
I FEAR
HAVE W
DERED
COURS

I
APOLOGIZE,
COMMANDER,
I FEAR WE
HAVE WAN-
DERED OFF
COURSE.

THIS IS
THE SPACE
YACHT OF
DECINE,
PRINCE OF
KREMO...

"... AND
MINE IS THE
LAST VOICE
YOU WILL EVER
HEAR."

AFTER
ALL, I CAN-
NOT ALLOW
WORD OF MY
**PEREGRINA-
TIONS** TO LEAK
OUT...

...UNTIL IT
IS **TOO LATE**
FOR ANYONE TO
DO ANYTHING
ABOUT IT.

HE
DESTROYED
THAT SHIP FOR
NO OTHER
REASON THAN
TO **SILENCE**
THOSE ON
BOARD!

HE'S
OBVIOUSLY
MAD...
AND *DES-*
PERATE!

I WILL
DIE
BEFORE
WEDDING
SUCH A
*MON-
STER!*



EARTH.



I'VE GOT IT.

AN ALARM!



GET IN HERE!
HURRY!
THERE'S TROUBLE!

WE'RE PICKING UP AN ENERGY EMISSION THAT'S OFF THE SCALE!

WHERE?

IN THE VICINITY OF MAXIMA'S SHIP!

MAXIMA! ARE YOU THERE?
COME ON... ANSWER ME!

THE SHIP'S STILL IN ORBIT.
BUT SCANNERS SHOW NOBODY'S ON BOARD.

SPACE-WALKING, PROBABLY... MAYBE.

THERE'S NO TRACE OF THE ANOMALY THAT HAD HER SO CURIOUS.

IF IT WAS AN ANOMALY.

MAYBE SOMETHING HAS TAKEN THEM.

LET'S GET ANOTHER SHIP READY! LET'S FIND OUT...

"...WHAT'S
GOING ON
UP THERE!"

FINALLY,
STEEL HAS
RUN OUT OF
HIS CANNED
AIR...

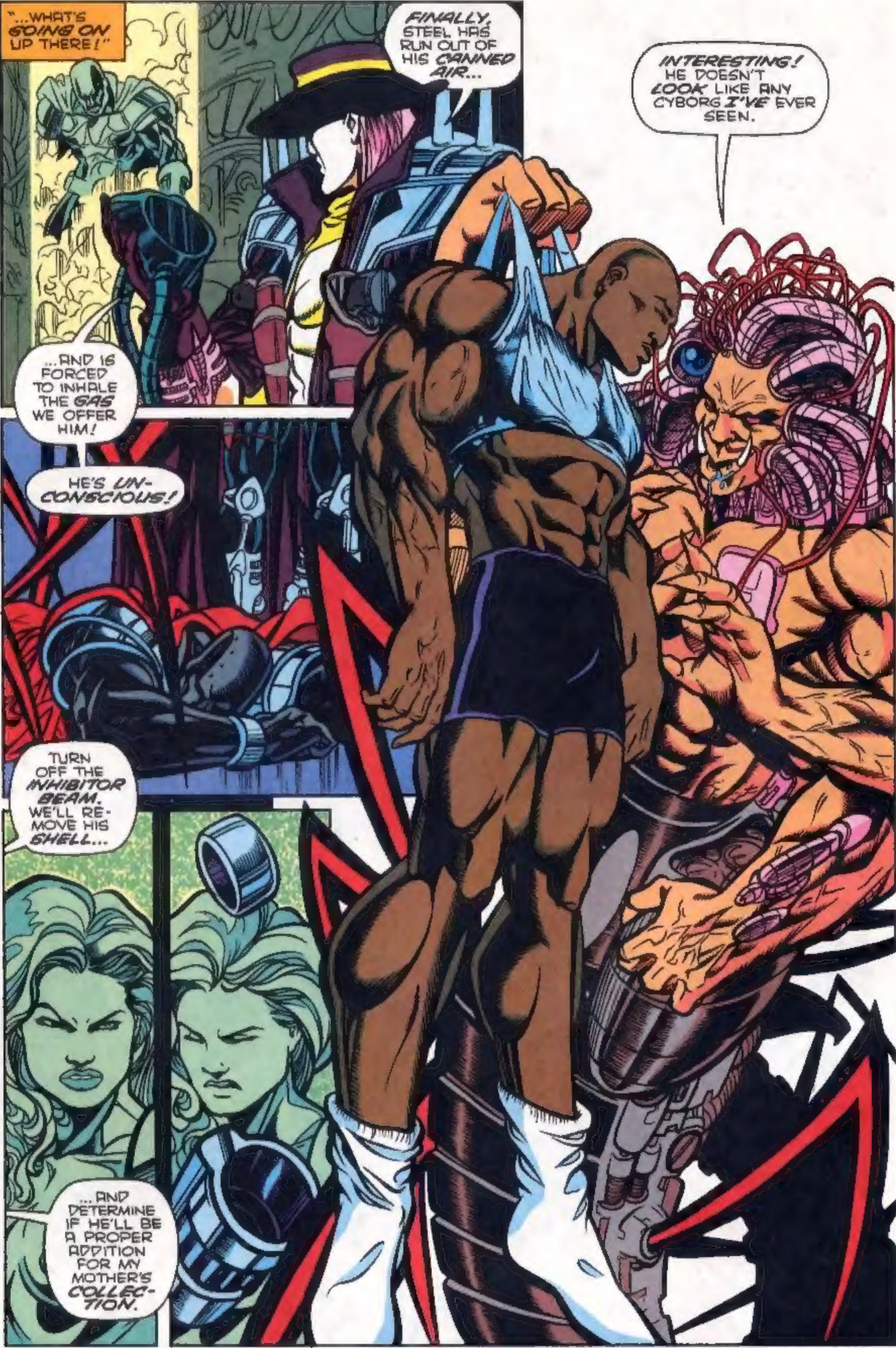
INTERESTING!
HE DOESN'T
LOOK LIKE ANY
CYBORG I'VE EVER
SEEN.

...AND IS
FORCED TO INHALE
THE GAS
WE OFFER
HIM!

HE'S UN-
CONSCIOUS!

TURN
OFF THE
INHIBITOR
BEAM.
WE'LL RE-
MOVE HIS
SHELL...

...AND
DETERMINE
IF HE'LL BE
A PROPER
ADDITION
FOR MY
MOTHER'S
COLLEC-
TION.



ODD.

THE
SENSORS
STILL
SUGGEST
HE *IS* A
CYBORG...

...BUT
THERE ARE
NO *WIRES*...
NO *CONNECTIONS*!

HE DOES
CONTROL
THIS COMPLEX
ARMOR.
B'ARD...

HE
CLAIMS YER
A *CYBORG*.
ARE YA?

NO...
NOT...
CYBORG.
NOT...

"...*WAKE*
HIM UP!"

STILL,
IF WE
RIP YM
WIDE
OPEN...

...MAYBE
WE CAN SEE
WHAT MAKES
'IM TICK.

YA HEARD IT
FROM THE
HORSE'S *MOUTH*,
DE'CINE.

AN' WITH
THAT GAS
FILLIN' HIS
LUNGS, HE
CAN'T LIE.



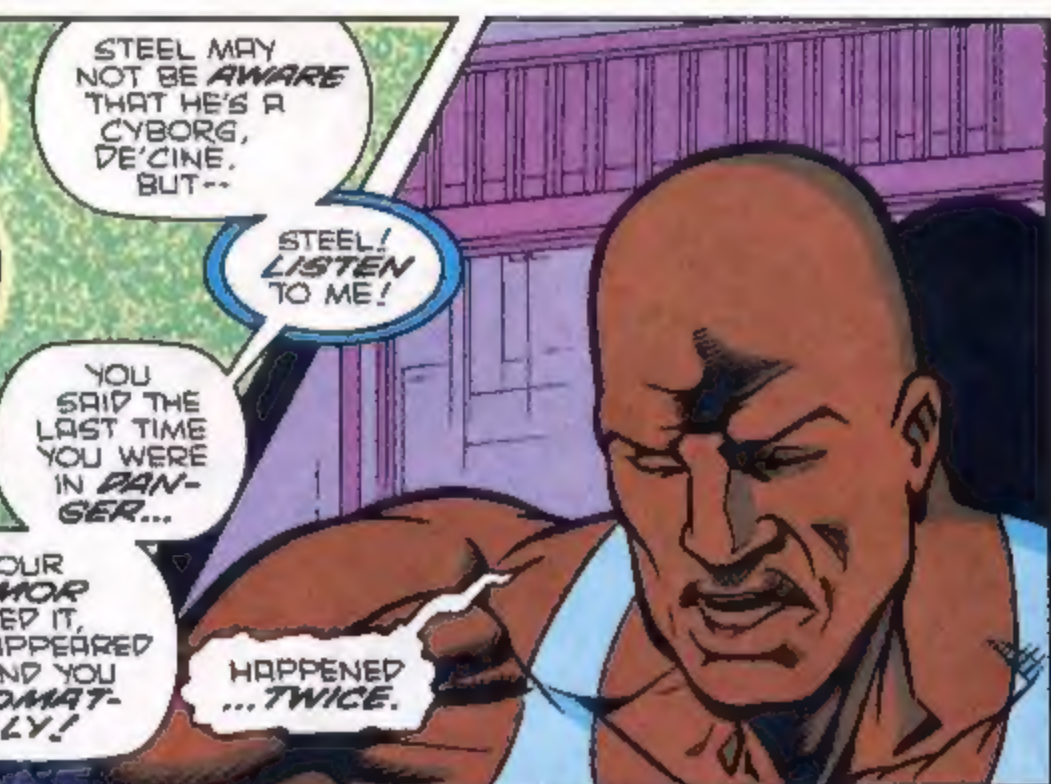
STEEL MAY NOT BE *AWARE* THAT HE'S A CYBORG, DE'CINE. BUT--

STEEL! LISTEN TO ME!

YOU SAID THE LAST TIME YOU WERE IN *DANGER*...

...YOUR *ARMOR* SENSED IT, AND APPEARED AROUND YOU *AUTOMATICALLY*!

HAPPENED ... *TWICE*.



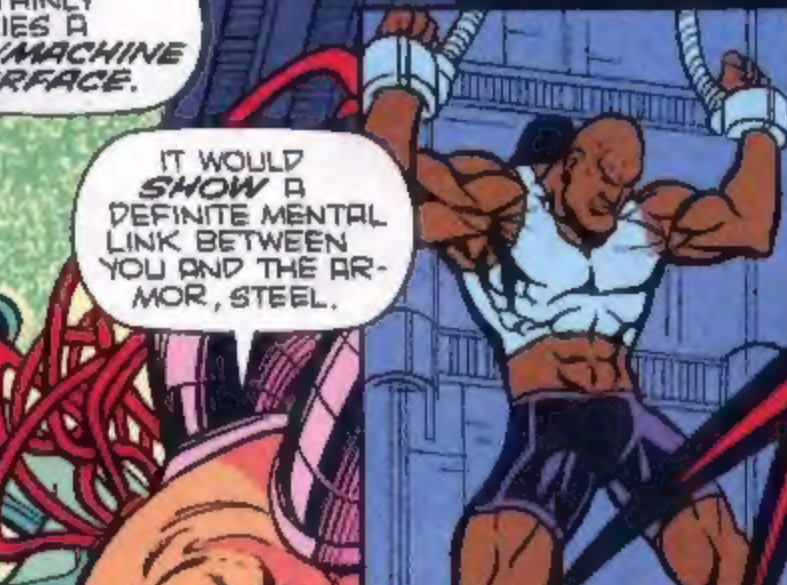
THAT CERTAINLY IMPLIES A *MIND/MACHINE INTERFACE*.

IT WOULD *SHOW* A DEFINITE MENTAL LINK BETWEEN YOU AND THE *ARMOR*, STEEL.



BUT IT APPEARS NOT TO BE *WORKING* NOW!

PERHAPS A *STIMULUS* IS REQUIRED TO *INITIATE* THE RESPONSE.



WRRRR

CALL YOUR *ARMOR* TO PROTECT YOU, STEEL...

...OR I WILL CUT OUT YOUR *HEART*!



DOESN'T
COME!

ARMOR...
PROTECTED
ME... BEFORE...
MUST HAVE BEEN...
FLUKE.

WRRRRRR

BEEP-BEEP

WHAT IS IT,
COMPUTER?

QUEEN
TECH'TRA HAS
ARRIVED!

EXCELLENT,
COMPUTER.
I'LL SPEAK TO
HER **HERE**.

YOU HAVE
CAPTURED OUR
ALMERACIAN
PRIZE, I SEE.
WELL DONE,
DE'CINE.

NOW WE HAVE
BUT TO COMPLETE
THE CEREMONY...

... AND PHASE
ONE OF OUR PLAN
TO GAIN CONTROL
OF ALMERAC
WILL BE COMPLETE.

WHAT
PLANS,
DE'CINE?
WHAT IS
THIS
ABOUT?

I WILL LINK
OUR SHIPS
MY SON, PUT
ON YOUR
WEDDING
FINERY.

AND SEE
THAT MAXIMA
WEARS CEREMONIAL
ALMERACIAN
GARB.

YOUR MARRIAGE
CEREMONY WILL BE
PERFORMED IN THE
STATEROOM OF MY
BATTLESHIP.

OVER
MY DEAD
BODY.

CAN'T GET
LOOSE!
DAMN!

THE
INHIBITOR
BEAM IS
DAMPENING
MAXIMA'S
MENTAL
POWERS!

BUT SHE'S SO
POWERFUL...

GOT TO
"THINK" AT
HER, LOUD
AS I CAN!
TELL HER...

I... HEAR
STEEL'S
VOICE...
SOFTEST
WHISPER,
BUT--

CAN'T
REMOVE HIS
BONDS
AS HE ASKS...
BUT THERE
MAY BE
ANOTHER
WAY.

WHAT
IS THIS
ALL
ABOUT,
B'RADE?

HOW CAN
A UNION
BETWEEN US
ADVANCE ANY
PLOT AGAINST
ALMERAC?

CAN IT
BE STRONG
ENOUGH TO
SHUT HER
DOWN EN-
TIRELY?

DE'CINE'S
OFF GETTIN'
ALL GUBBIED
UP FOR THE
BIG EVENT!

AN' YOU'RE
WIGGLIN'
LIKE A FISH
ON TH' LINE.

YA CAN'T
SAVE THE
LITTLE LADY!
BETTER
WORRY 'BOUT
YOURSELF!

MY
FAMILY
HAS BEEN
OUSTED!

OH,
DE'CINE
KNOWS ALL
'BOUT
THAT!

YOU'VE BEEN
BANISHED
FROM YER
WORLD.

BUT ONCE
YER HITCHED,
DE'CINE'S TAKIN'
ALMERAC BACK--
FOR THE **KRENON**
EMPIRE.

HE'LL
RULE
THROUGH
YOU...

AND
PASS THE
WORLD TO
YER LITTLE
**FOUR-
ARMED**
BRATS!

DRAWING
HIS **GUN**
MAY BE THE
HARDEST
THING
I'VE EVER
DONE!

LOOSE
STEEL'S
BONDS,
B'RAD.
WHILE YOU
STILL HAVE
A **HEAD!**



THE
BARREL'S
TREMBLIN'
PRINCESS!

HOW
LONG YA
THINK YA CAN
HOLD IT LIKE
THAT...?

HA! LOOKS
LIKE IT'S TIME
FER YOU TA
GET INTO...



"YER
WEDDIN'
PUDS!"

LORD
DE'GINE!
YA LOOK
LIKE A
PRINCE!

WE
HAVE
DOCKED
WITH MY
MOTHER'S
SHIP

WHILE
MAXIMA AND
I ARE ON
BOARD, I
WANT YOU TO
TEST STEEL
THOROUGH-
LY!

IF HE IS
A CYBORG,
I WILL GIVE
HIM TO MY
MOTHER.

IF HE IS
NOT... THEN
KILL HIM!

QUEEN
TECH'TRA!
MOTHER!

MAY I
INTRODUCE MY
BETROTHED...
THE PRINCESS
MAXIMA OF
ALMERAC.

MY
DEAR! HOW
LOVELY
YOU ARE! I'VE
HEARD SO
MUCH ABOUT
YOU--

I
HAVE JUST
TURNED
CANCEL ON
YOUR AUDIO
CAPABILITY,
MAXIMA!

SCOWL
AND CURSE
THROUGH THE
CEREMONY AS
YOU PLEASE.

MY VIDEO
TECHNICIANS
WILL, NONETHE-
LESS, MAKE
CERTAIN THAT
YOU SMILE
AND MOUTH THE
REQ'UED
PHRASES...

YOUR
MONEYED
TONGUE DRIPS
POISON,
WITCH

I WILL
PIE BEFORE
I MARRY YOUR
MONSTER
SON! I
WILL--

CLIK!

ON THE
WAGES OF
YOUR WEDDING
THAT WILL BE
BROADCAST
ACROSS THE
GALAXY.

BY THE
WAY, DE'CINE,
WHERE IS
MY DARLING
B ADE?

I CAN'T
BREAK
FREE!

AM I
GLAD THE
QUEEN RE-
MEMBERED TO
ASK ABOUT
ME.

BUT
SHE'S GOT
A REAL
SHORT
ATTENTION
SPAN

AM I NEED
TO BE THERE
... BESIDE HER ...
TO SAFEGUARD
MY POSITION AS
FAVORITE.

THE **HYDRAULICS**
IN MY ARMOR
WOULD SNAP
THESE SHACKLES
LIKE TWIGGS...

BUT, TRY
AS I MIGHT,
I CAN'T JUST
WISH IT ON.

TWICE NOW,
IT SURROUNDED
ME BUT ONLY
WHEN I WAS
IN **MORTAL**
DANGER.

I UNDER-
STAND YOU
WERE
HIDING OUT
ON EARTH.

PERHAPS,
ONCE YOU
HAVE CON-
TROL OF
ALMERAC...

WE WILL
CONQUER
EARTH
AS WELL.

MORTAL...
DANGER...

AND SINCE I'M ALSO A FAN OF THE OLD WEST-TERMS...

... AH THINK AH CAN TALK THE MAVERICK'S LANGUAGE.

HEY, YA SIMPLE-HEADED, YELLER-BELLIED, TONGUE-SPLITTIN' CATTLE KATE!

WHAT?!

YA HEARD ME! YA COLD-FOOTED, GUN-SHY DANIEL BOONE!

YER GRABBIN' THE BRANDIN' IRON BY THE HOT END, TIN MAN!

I GOT THE JOB A' DECIDIN' WHETHER YER A CYBORG OR NOT

I JUST DECIDED YER NOT.

SO ADIOS, TIN-MAN!

AH'M GONNA TAKE REAL PLEASURE IN SHIPPIN' YER CARCASS TO THE BONE YARD!

BROW!
BLAM!

WELL, WHAT DO YOU KNOW...

...IT WORKED !!!

LOOKS
LIKE HE
IS A
CYBORG!

AN'
LONG AS
AH KEEP
FIRIN'
AT HIM...

THOSE
*RICO-
CHETS*'LL
BOUNCE OFF
HIS ARMOR
LIKE A
SWARM O'
BEEES!

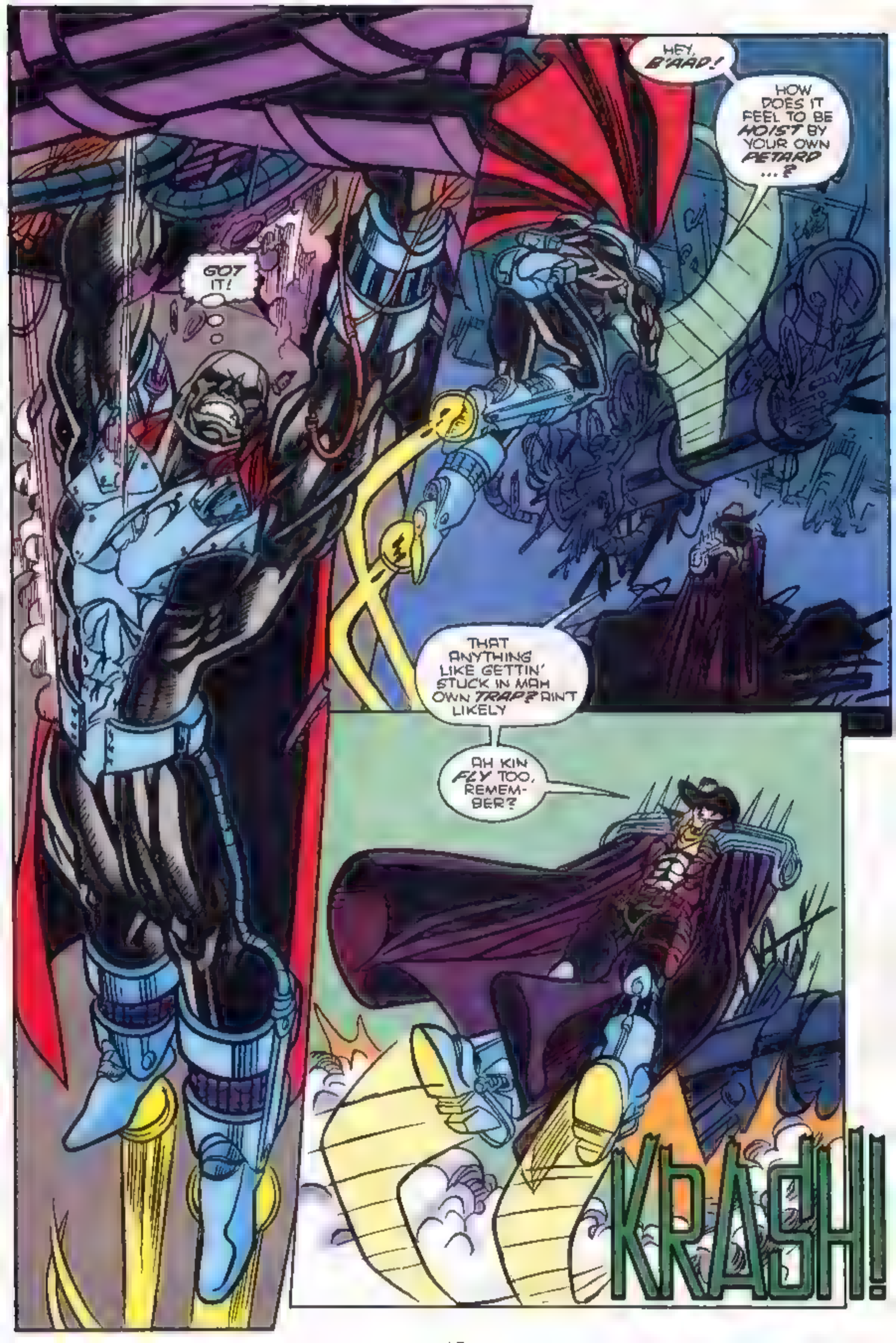
KRAK THOOM!

**BAM
BAM**

I'M
FREE!

NO
PROBLEM!
I'LL JUST
KEEP OUTTA
HIS WAY...

WHILE
AH BRING
THE *CEILING*
CRASHIN' DOWN
ON TOP OF
'IM!



HEY,
B'RAD!

HOW
DOES IT
FEEL TO BE
HOIST BY
YOUR OWN
PETARD
...?

GOT
IT!

THAT
ANYTHING
LIKE GETTIN'
STUCK IN MAH
OWN TRAP? AINT
LIKELY

AH KIN
FLY TOO,
REMEM-
BER?

KRASH!

DO YOU, MAXIMA,
TAKE DE' CINE,
PRINCE OF KRENÖ,
TO BE YOUR
HUSBAND...

I BETTER
END THIS
BROUHAWA
BEFORE IT'S
TOO LATE!

STEEL'S
DISTRACTED!
AN' AH GOT
MAH STRATEGY
NOW

THAT
LAST BIT
DIDN'T
WORK TOO
GOOD

...BUT
BRING THAT
PROTECTION
SCREEN
DOWN ON HIS
HEAD...

AN'
SURE AS
THE SUN
SHINES, AH'LL
BURY
HIM!

BLAM!
BLAM!


SKRASH!

BLAM!

KRA-THOOM!







WELL,
TIN-MAN...
CYBORG
OR NOT...

...LOOKS
LIKE YOU'RE
HITTIN' TH'
LONG
TRAIL.

THE END?

STEEL

DC COMICS

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Been awhile, hasn't it? So let's get down to business...

PREVIOUSLY IN STEEL: Despite the fact that his armor is unstable, disappearing and reappearing of its own volition, Steel went on a quest to find Hazard's spy satellite, hoping that when he found it he could track down Hazard's headquarters. After approaching Extreme Justice for help, Steel and Maxima headed into outer space, where Steel learned that Maxima had an agenda of her own: to investigate a space anomaly that turned out to be a Krenon battle cruiser. Steel's mission was all but forgotten when, while searching the cruiser, he and Maxima were taken hostage by the evil alien De'cine and his partner B'add. De'cine has big plans, it seems, for Maxima...and Steel is considered quite expendable...

Dear Steel,

I just read STEEL #8 and it was fabulous! I've been reading STEEL since day one ("Reign of the Superman") and I must say that Chris Batista draws the ultimate Steel, and Jon Bogdanove and Louise Simonson write the ultimate stories. I'm quite happy that they don't have a villain-per-month like practically everybody else. I'm glad that they stick with a story for a while, and I can't wait to see what Black Ops has to offer. That Hazard guy is absolutely ruthless!

I was wondering if Steel was going to have a relationship with Shauna, but after Dr. Quick's comment on page 8 of issue #8, I don't know what to think. But please don't turn this into a love triangle; they're so cheesy!

Duncan Paterson
Ottawa, Ontario

Cheesy? What about Clark, Pete and Lana? Or Clark, Lois and Jeb? Or Superboy, Tana, and Roxy? Or Glorith, Valor, and Mordru? Or Captain Comet, Marj'n and Garryn Bek? Or Bo, Gina, and Billie? (To the five people who get that, thank you!). Love triangles are cool! But I think Steel is attracted to only one lady in that mushy, romantic way...and I'm not sayin' who it is!

Dear Editor,

STEEL #8 was a good issue. I enjoyed the way that the young John Henry was used in the story. Although not billed as a Zero Hour tie-in, it still made good use of the time anomalies.

What I really enjoyed about the issue was the transitional sense that I got from it. Although I don't think

every super-hero comic needs to have super-villains in it, I was beginning to get tired of the gang-type stories that were appearing up until now. I think the gang stories are appropriate. They help the book, and they help define the struggles of the characters. When I think back to the previous seven issues, however, that is the only thing that comes to mind (that, and the "Worlds Collide" crossover). Thank you for moving forward.

Throughout the run, though, I have really enjoyed Chris Batista's pencils. He does an excellent job with the armor, as well as showing what a powerful-looking man John Henry is out of the armor.

I followed this book after John Henry's role in "The Reign of the Superman." I enjoy the continued references to the Superman family; it gives the feeling that he is still part of that family. But please do not hesitate to get Steel out on his own a little more. Joining a super-team at this point is not what I'd like to see, but I would enjoy seeing an occasional team-up with other super-heroes. Perhaps a Steel/Superboy, or Steel/Batman story could come in the near future.

Thanks for putting out a quality book.

David Toney
Vista, CA

You're welcome, David. From now on we'll be mixing the urban, real-world gang stuff with far-out, science-fantasy super-hero stuff, so there will be something for everybody in STEEL. But right now there are no major team-ups in the works, although Steel has appeared in several issues of GUY GARDNER: WARRIOR (most recently, last month in #27, and he'll appear briefly next month in #29, alongside dozens of other DC heroes—so check it out). And be back here in a couple of months for some Superman family-type action.

Dear Steel team,

First of all, I would like to say that I have enjoyed reading about the adventures of Steel since his first story in MAN OF STEEL #22. He and Superboy were my favorite two new Supermen.

Now, on to the subject of STEEL #8. This was an excellent issue, but I was hoping for more of a tie-in to ZERO HOUR. Hazard seems to be a pretty interesting villain. What does he plan to do with John Henry's armor? Whatever he wants, it can't be good.

Are he and Black Ops taking the place of Amertek as Steel's archenemies?

I have a couple of questions for you:

1) Why doesn't Jon Bogdanove work on this book anymore?

2) How about a visit from Superboy or Supergirl?

Aaron Armstrong
Ontario, Canada

Hazard's true intentions are his little secret right now, but you're right: whatever they are, they can't be good. Right now, with the Colonel in prison, it looks like Hazard and the super-powered Team Hazard are number one on Steel's bad guy list. Exactly how bad they are remains to be seen.

And to answer your questions: 1) Jon is pretty busy pencilling MAN OF STEEL on a monthly basis right now, but hopefully, when his schedule allows, he'll return to these here pages and write an adventure or two. And, in case you missed it, go out and grab a copy of last year's STEEL Annual. Written by Jon and his talented wife Judy, this is the first (and, so far, only) Steel Elseworlds! 2) Superboy is occupied with things Hawaiian at the moment, but I like the idea of Supergirl—a lot. Consider it under consideration. Meanwhile, you can read up on the Girl of Steel (or is that Girl of Protoplasm?) in SHOWCASE '95 #1 and #2, and then look for her in NEW TITANS, starting with issue #120.

Dear Editor,

Cool! So now I know that Black Ops is a government organization employing a core team of Titans and up to a maximum of about one hundred others who were survivors of an incident I only know as "The Void." So, all these "Black Ops" guys are from the future?! Hmmm, I wonder if Booster Gold could maybe let Steel know what these guys are all about?

Also, how about this Zero Hour stuff? With all the DC titles ending with that inconclusive universe just vanishing, or stopping right there, or right then, why, in STEEL, did continuity seem to continue? It didn't vanish like all the rest of the titles I read. So that makes me wonder.

Please believe me, I like the fact that all the titles in one month seem to just end. It builds a true feeling of continuity. So what makes STEEL so special that it can stand apart from the rest of the DC titles? I read a lot of books, and so far, this is the only one that I've noticed didn't fade away and show the

confusion in the characters that was so common to all those titles (by the way, beautiful job on that!).

Loren C. Ross
address withheld

Apologies, Loren. The reason that STEEL #8 was not part of the Big Fade was that it was supposed to ship a week earlier. Only the books that shipped the fourth week of the month (simultaneously with ZERO HOUR #1) were supposed to "white out." When STEEL shipped a week late, a victim of an unrelated "anomaly," it looked out of place, even though it wasn't...not really.

As for Black Ops/Team Hazard being a group of Titans from the future, all I can say is: huh? These guys have nothing to do with those guys (all of whom were from an alternative future and got wiped out during Zero Hour). It's an interesting concept, though. I'm curious to know where you found the "clues" that led you in that direction.

Dear Steel guys,

I don't know what it is about Steel, but I like him. Just one question, though. How come in SUPERMAN #82, Steel's suit was destroyed, but in ADVENTURES #505 he had his whole suit on? Oh well, Superboy's jacket was on and gone in the same issues!

Tony Eason
Jonesboro, AR

Good question, Tony! Until now we've always assumed that Supergirl helped him out in rebuilding at least some of his armor. After all, in SUPERMAN #82 she makes a new costume for Supes by telekinetically "realigning" his tattered clothing. Chances are that she did the same favor for John Henry, so his identity (and other things) would not be exposed to the public. Maybe she used Superboy's leather jacket as extra building "material." Then again, in light of what's been happening with Steel's armor lately, anything is possible.

Dear Steel,

Just wanted to drop a few lines to let you know how good a job you're doing, and also to ask a few questions.

First, I don't know how the fans will take these "Elseworlds" stories, but I love them—my favorite, of course, being STEEL Annual #1. Y'know, it's really refreshing when a big company like DC does an "alternative reality" storyline and doesn't milk the concept dry. Also, the big crossovers in annuals are much too boring these days, and who really wants another new character, or another bad guy, or another huge battle? Maybe the first couple of years is okay, but now?

That's where the STEEL Annual comes in, and I really prefer it, not as an "Elseworlds" storyline, but as an undisputable event that took place in the DC Universe. I really hope that's the case because this annual shouldn't be written off as "just another story" but really be a part of Steel's unfolding

past and inspiration. No, this story was just too good and important.

I also realize why Steel doesn't wear an "S" symbol on his armor, but regardless of that I still feel he needs something on his armor, or maybe even the cape (don't ever lose the cape). Hey, I know! How about a blue "S" symbol on the back of his cape? And better yet, have Superman suggest or maybe even insist upon it. Well, it's just a thought.

Also, please don't let this Amertek thing stretch out for too long. There's a lot to tell here, things that should be told without the fans waiting too long. Actually, Amertek should be something in the background that's always there. Kind of like LexCorp.

I've also heard something about a sidekick for our main man. Bad idea, if it's true. This comic should have a major focus on Steel, and it's way too early for someone to latch on to him. I would actually expect some sort of sidekick in, say, issue #100. Then again, this is just speculation, and maybe none of it is true. But I'll be watching.

Moyer Hall
Warminster, PA

I hope you will!

Steel won't be getting a sidekick or an "S" symbol in the near future, although Amertek is gone for the foreseeable future. And it's great that you enjoyed the annual so much, but I'm sorry to say that it's really just an "Elseworlds," like all the other annuals last summer. It's not even an alternative reality, like a "What If...?" but more like the old DC "Imaginary Stories" from a couple of decades ago. Nope, John Henry's inspiration definitely comes from both the Man of Steel and the Irons family as a whole.

Folks at STEEL,

In less than a year you have created a corner for Steel in the DC Universe, given him more personal villains than some longer-lived heroes I know, and have created his personality to boot. So, what are you going to do now? No, you will not go to Disney world! Please just continue what you're doing.

If Steel turns out to be a metahuman, you will have no problem with me, as long as you don't change his personality. My only request as to his personal life is that it is expanded beyond his family. Although John has a large extended family, his life needs to expand. Maybe give him a job, or what about some friends?

There are some heroes who are considered big shots in the DCU, heroes the everyday person looks up to. Superman is one of them, so is the Flash, and (until recently) so was Green Lantern. Steel operates in the capital of the nation, where the press is in full effect. Instead of using the press to create the typical "hero with negative P.R." storyline, make Steel a true hero that the public loves. Maybe he could meet the President. Let him be considered by the public as one of the "upper" heroes even though he has been around for only a little while.

You have created Amertek to be this huge corporation. It seems that there are a lot of big businesses running around with no connection to each other. Over the course of time, use this title to link all the big businesses in the DCU so your readers understand where each company fits. LexCorp, S.T.A.R., WayneTech, Gunfire's business, and a lot of others are prominently featured in one or two titles but are never heard of in the rest of the universe. Please create some continuity.

Steel obviously cares a lot for the inner city. If he becomes a celebrity super-hero, let him go to schools and talk about the danger of drugs or gangs. Maybe he could take on some official capacity with the White House as a representative.

For that matter, what are Steel's political beliefs? The location he lives in gives you the opportunity to expand on ideas not focused upon in other titles. Would Steel attend a rally for something he believed in? Would he act for something he believed in? Please tell.

In general, Steel is one of the best offshoots of the "Reign of the Supermen" storyline, and I hope you folks continue to chronicle his adventures until the end of time. Oh wait, that just happened. Just continue to do a good job.

Jonathan Krause
Short Hills, NJ

Don't worry, Jonathan, Steel's personality isn't going to change because of powers that he may (or may not) have. And although we've kicked around the idea of giving John Henry a job, there are no solid plans to make him a 9 to 5 guy yet. Right now, he's fairly secure, financially speaking. As for his relationship with the public, we're gradually building toward something with that for next year. You'll see. Oh boy, you'll see!

Steel's politics have not been officially established or labeled although we can assume that, based on his past experience, he doesn't have the greatest trust in the government. Would he go to a rally for something he believes in? As John Henry, sure he would. Would he act for something he believes in? As Steel, he does that all the time.

We won't be hearing from Amertek in the near future. Like lots of real-world businesses, they've shut down for now, in the wake of the Colonel's arrest. There's plenty of continuity in the DC Universe regarding the various industries, but I'm not sure that a story explaining the relationship of these businesses would be very exciting. But speaking of exciting...

NEXT ISSUE: Always a bridesmaid and never a bride! Will Steel be forced to bear witness as the hideous De'cine marries Maxima? And if that happens, what will become of Steel? There's a crowd, after all! John Henry's star trek may lead to his becoming lost in space—permanently! Even if his armor holds out, Steel may not survive "Maximum Orbit" part two, on sale next month!

—Frank Pittarese
Happy New Year!